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DAAG-PAP-A (M) (21 Nov 72) DAFFD-OTT

4 December 1972

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: COI Milton F. Uffmann
Chief Army Section, MAAG, Ethiopia, 4 Aug 70 - 25 Jun 72 (U)

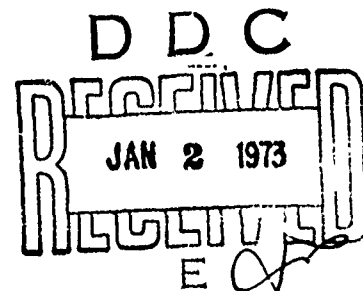
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SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report of Colonel Milton F. Uffmann,
RCS CSFOR-74

THRU: Chief Military Assistance Advisory Group, Ethiopia

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
ATTN: FOR OT UT
Department of the Army
Washington, DC 20310

Country: Ethiopia

Debriefing Report by: Colonel Milton F. Uffmann

Duty Assignment: Chief Army Section, MAAG Ethiopia

Inclusive Dates: 4 August 1970 - 25 June 1972

Date of Report: 19 June 1972

1. Causative factors of the insurgency in country:

a. Political turbulence has been endemic to this area since the dissolution of the Italian colonial authority by the allied conquest in 1942. Dissension as well as banditry increased steadily during and after the skeletal British occupation. This dissension was crystallized by the arbitrary unilateral Ethiopian takeover of Eritrea in 1960.

b. Several factors have worked against the acceptance of Ethiopian (Amharic) control of Eritrea. Christian Eritreans, comprising about 40% of the population, are proud of their ancient culture and language, Tigrinya. The Tigrays formed the center of Ethiopian Christendom before the Amharas rose to power, and they are proud of their elite place in history and consider themselves culturally and intellectually superior to the less racially pure Amhara. The long period of Italian/British rule probably reinforced these feelings of superiority. Colonialism did leave the Eritreans a superior technical and educational base, as well as a relatively sophisticated provincial government and civil service. As the most financially solvent of Ethiopia's provinces, Eritrea has probably contributed more to the national government's coffers than it has received. In particular it is claimed that development projects have in general favored Addis Ababa and other Amhara-dominated areas. Additionally, Eritreans claim that they are being slighted in educational benefits and in the apportionment of government jobs. Excesses and abuses and various "carpetbaggers" from the Amhara central government have further acted to alienate the Eritreans.

c. On the Moslem side (also about 40% of the population in Eritrea) there is the age-old Christian/Moslem antipathy which carries with it the fear of domination and discrimination by the central Christian authority in Addis Ababa. Although Ethiopian laws provide for equal opportunity for Moslems throughout the Empire, Moslem Eritreans are convinced that they will not get an even break under the present regime. And in truth, as in other societies, these admirable laws work less than perfectly in assuring

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genuine equality and freedom from social, economic, and governmental discrimination. Even if the Ethiopians' performance came to match the words of their laws, the Moslem population would take a long time to lose their belief that they are victimized by the dominant religious and governing class. They point to the paucity of Moslem officials in the government; they note the disproportionate scarcity of Moslem children in the schools, and the dearth of secondary schools in the Moslem western and Red Sea lowlands, however they ignore the semi-nomadic nature of the population there and the tendency of Moslems generally to approach secular education cautiously, and they also ignore the preeminent role of Moslems in all Ethiopian commerce.

d. With some 80 percent of the population naturally hostile to Amhara rule, and with the "Voice of Cairo" arousing Arab nationalist fervor among the Moslem population, the basis for insurgency was apparent even before the Federation was dissolved.

2. The Insurgent --

a. Organization:

Previously it was believed that all ELF forces were governed by a Supreme Council (Mejles al Ulla), consisting of an estimated eight to fifteen persons with permanent offices in Damascus. Members of the Supreme Council - also known as the General Command (GC) doubled as chiefs of ELF branch offices in Aden, Baghdad, Cairo, Jidda, Mogadiscio, Algiers and Khartoum, and as such were controlled by the Foreign Office, headed by Foreign Secretary Osman Saleh Sabbe. Now it appears that, in fact, there are at least two major rival factions vying for control of the ELF. Recent reports indicate that an Aden-based faction, known as the Peoples Liberation Forces (PLF) has challenged the leadership of the GC. The Aden reports indicate the GC is characterized by an Arab/Muslim orientation, whereas the PLF claim to be more "Africa-oriented" and contain some Christian elements (as well as a Marxist flavor).

b. Command control.

The degree of control by the GC over other "branch offices" has also come into doubt, and the extent of coordination between groups at various foreign locations is unknown. It appears, however, that coordination is minimal and that serious differences exist among leadership elements in terms of political strategy and operational/political control of forces within Eritrea. Reports from early 1972 indicate the PLF would like to extend the insurgency to all of Ethiopia while the opposing factions desire to restrict activities to Eritrea. The IEGF 6th Brigade Commander reported that at a peace conference in the Danakil area in February-March 1972, fighting broke out between the two factions and an estimated 250 ELF personnel were killed.

c. Strategy and tactics.

(1) Insurgency operations did not begin, even on a rudimentary scale, until 1964, when a friendly regime in Sudan opened the floodgates to supply training, and operation of ELF commandos from Sudanese territory. This support has since diminished as a result of HIM's discussions with Sudan's leaders. The military government in Sudan had reportedly agreed with HIM not to support armed insurgents within Sudanese borders

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(2) From 1964-69, insurgent activities included printing and distributing propaganda material; attempting to recruit and collect taxes; arms smuggling, mostly across the Sudanese border; limited terrorist activities directed against farms, villages, and occasionally selected homes or neighborhoods in the cities; political assassinations; and night raids on police posts. Insurgents frequently engaged in banditry, which long has been endemic to rural areas of Western Ethiopia. Accordingly, the IEG often refers to insurgents as Shifta (bandits) since this also can be used by the IEG to play down the political nature of the insurgency. A departure from previous cautious guerrilla tactics was displayed at an engagement with a Commando Police unit in early September 1968. The ELF fought a pitched battle and met severe losses. The IEG was quick to point out the end of the ELF was in sight but in March 1969 the ELF launched a three month offensive directed primarily against economic targets within Ethiopia and against such external targets as Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) and Ethiopian holdings in Djibouti. Between June and November 1969, ELF activities consisted primarily of propaganda broadcasts, particularly from Damascus and Baghdad. Their military operations during the same period were greatly reduced, probably as a result of pressures applied by the Imperial Ethiopian Ground Forces (IEGF) and Commando Police.

(3) Developments during 1970-71 were not encouraging from the IEG standpoint. Reports of almost daily ELF engagements or incidents, involving groups of 10-15 ELF personnel occurred throughout the period. ELF forces were generally on the offensive with government forces reacting to ELF provocations rather than having the initiative, although somewhat greater pressure was applied against the ELF following the assassination of Major General Teshome, CO 2nd IEGF Division in November 1970. The Emperor's declaration of a State of Emergency on 16 December 1970 is indicative of the seriousness of the situation at that time.

1971 saw the fatal shooting of a Kagnew Station courier and an EAL hijacking incident arousing world-wide publicity. However, repeated rumors of planned attacks on Kagnew Station and the threatened campaign of kidnapping foreign diplomats did not materialize.

d. Armament.

(1) Equipment of all types, including arms and ammunition, has generally been in short supply, although well maintained. Reports from IEGF units indicate, however that the arms supply has increased. The quality of weaponry has also been upgraded notably due to an influx of AK47 small arms. Reports indicate that the attack unit (10-15 men) are armed with automatic weapons while the supporting units either have no weapons or older rifles, such as the Lee Enfield and old Italian weapons. The RPG-2 80mm Antitank Launcher has recently appeared but rumors of the introduction of the 107mm Recoilless rifle have not been confirmed. Weapons captured by the 2nd Division units include:

AK47 Russian
Carl Gustaf SMG, Swedish
Mannlicher Rifle, Italian
83mm Bazooka, Belgium
PPSH 1941 Rifle, Russian
81mm Mortar, Italian

M-52 Rifle, Czech
FN, LAW, Belgium
Beretta 1930 MG, Italian
SKS M21, Russian
Beretta M-30 SMG, Italian
RPG-2 AT or R-27 Czech

M-23 MG Czech
303 Rifle, British
60mm Mortar, Italian
M-25 SMG, Czech
Mauser Rifle, Belgium
83mm Mortar, u/i

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(2) Anti-tank mines include Czech Bakelite, see description page 333 TM 5-280, the Chinese anti-personnel POMZ-2 mine, see page 471.2 TM 5-280, Chinese M-2 Plastic pressure mine and unidentified Round Canister Anti-personnel Mines. The most prevalent mine is the Chinese M-2.

e. Communications.

Sophisticated communication equipment is markedly absent, with messengers reportedly being largely relied upon.

f. Outside support.

(1) Syria, the Sudan, Yemen, Somali, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait have contributed in varying degrees to the ELF cause. Assistance fell off following the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, but has intermittently increased since.

(2) Sudan in the mid-sixties was the principal supporter, and gave the ELF impetus for active operations. In 1971 under pressure from the IEO, the Sudan ostensibly reversed its course and agreed with Ethiopia not to support armed insurgents within Sudanese borders.

(3) Syria now appears to be the largest contributor. Most supplies from Syria and other Arab countries apparently come across the Red Sea straits from Aden.

(4) A certain amount of assistance has reportedly been rendered by Red China and Cuba. China reportedly provided training for at least two groups of guerrillas at the Guerrilla and Insurgency Training Center in Namking and has provided arms and supplies. Cuba has trained a small number of ELF Guerrillas.

(5) Good will missions to Sudan and Yemen by the Ethiopian Foreign Minister in 1971 has apparently reduced the outward support of these countries to the ELF and reportedly Ketema told the Chinese Communist Charge in Addis that Ethiopia would break off newly established relations if Peking continued to support the ELF.

g. Intelligence capability.

Very little information is available on the organizational structure of ELF intelligence nets. While most ELF members and sympathizers report intelligence information, detailed information is lacking. According to an ELF defector, the ELF take counterespionage matters seriously and do not hesitate to take drastic measures to preserve their position. Execution appears to be standard punishment for those violating ELF rules of conduct. The use of young boys (14-16 years of age) appears to be common practice with the ELF to obtain IEOF troop movement information.

h. Use of terrorism.

Prior to 1970 there had been little terrorism. In 1970 and 1971 the ELF, apparently under more radical leadership, increased incidents of terrorism apparently designed to intimidate the local population and remove pro-Government

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officials from the villages. In 1972 terrorism has seemed to return to the pre-1970 level. The immediate aim of the ELF today seems to be to harass the IEC into negotiating political demands and they require a strong military/political position from which to negotiate in event of the Emperor's demise or other events that might cause internal political upheaval.

3. Local Government counterinsurgency actions.

a. Command and Control.

(1) The lack of an effective unified command to bring police, Commando Police, Army, Navy, Air Force and the Territorial Army into a coordinated counterinsurgency force, has been a consistent and critical shortcoming. The situation appeared to improve with HIM's Declaration of Emergency in December 1970 and the replacement of Asrate Kassa by LTG Debebe as governor-general of Eritrea. LTG Debebe now has, at least in theory, operational control of all government forces in Eritrea, however command relationships are still not clear. Each service acknowledges LTG Debebe's overall command but according to a high level staff officer of the 2nd Division LTG Debebe is not in touch with the ongoing in Eritrea and takes too long to reach a decision and frequently forgets to provide the Division with an answer. Liaison is virtually non-existent between the services. The Navy still goes its own way to a large extent and it is unknown to what degree the 2nd Air Group, located in Asmara, takes its directives from AF Headquarters in Debre Zeit rather than from the Governor-General. According to the CG, IECF, he has relinquished operational control of the 2nd Division to the Governor-General and expects only to be kept informed and to provide logistical support to the Division.

(2) The lack of a Joint Operation Center (JOC) in Asmara to allow the Governor-General to coordinate activities has repeatedly been brought to the attention of the Minister of Defense. Until a clear Chain of Command Line is established the Air Force and Navy will continue to respond to their higher headquarters in the Addis Area rather than the Governor-General.

b. Operational Planning.

(1) Operational planning has been impeded by the factors discussed in para a above. IEC employment of forces has been mainly on a basis of reaction to incidents, interspersed with Brigade size operations where blocking positions are set up followed by company size sweeps of the area that accomplish little.

(2) MAAG's one officer advisor to the 2nd Division (a Major) is required to limit his activities to logistic areas while three Israeli Officer Advisors concentrate on operations, training and intelligence. Under CMAAG's direction, a team of advisors from Addis worked with the 2nd Division staff for several months and after much trouble obtaining operational and intelligence data came up with an excellent Operational Plan which seems to be gathering dust at 2nd Division Headquarters.

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c. Air Ground Operations.

(1) The 2nd Air Group closely coordinates pre-planned air cover missions and when air cover is present can bring in fighters within 10-15 minutes.

(2) Air Force reaction to immediate requests remains unsatisfactory. The Air Force is unable or unwilling to furnish the Division Ground FAC's, thus the lack of air-ground communication limits the ability of the Air Force to bring effective strikes on the right target. In August 1971, the 2nd Division offered to furnish four ground officers to the Air Force to be trained as FAC's. In March 1972 five 2nd Division officers finally graduated from a well conducted FAC course of instruction. However the Air Force owns the AN/PRC 41 Air Ground radios and to-date has not turned over the required radios to the 2nd Division so that the trained FAC's can be utilized. Approval of the radio transfer is apparently being stalled at Air Force Headquarters in Debre Zeit.

d. Ground Force Tactics.

(1) The 2nd IEGF Division has positioned its twelve battalions in blocking positions at key communication centers in Eritrea. Companies occupy positions up to 75km from the battalion base camp, and actively patrol the area. Their objective seems to be seen in as many places as possible and thus show the population that the Army can move at will anywhere in Eritrea.

(2) Approximately every three months a brigade size operation is conducted (there have been four in the past 12 months). Blocking positions are set up at key locations and reinforced companies then sweep through the area. Needless to say the operations have not been successful in locating and destroying ELF but do impress the local population. By concentrating the sweeps in areas where there are indications of conflict between the various insurgency factions the Division hopes to induce surrender of ELF personnel under the Amnesty program.

(3) The Acting CG of the Division, BG Telahoun recognizes the need to utilize small, well trained, long range patrols rather than the company size patrols now employed. Over a year ago detailed plans were made to train 100 recruits as a counter-guerrilla force. These men would be organized into 100 men companies that would be highly mobile and able to quickly move by helicopter to reinforce the long range patrols. According to BG Telahoun the training was cancelled after about three weeks of training due to pressure from the Brigade Commanders to utilize the trainees as unit replacements. Battalion strengths were down to 450 men from the 630 TO&E strength. At the present time one company of 200 men remains at the Division Training Center undergoing counter-guerrilla training.

(4) Brigade Commanders indicate to me that they receive good intelligence on the location of ELF elements, but state they are unable to react quickly to this intelligence since they lack the required mobility. The 2-3 helicopters available to the Division are often tied up on resupply operations to remote areas.

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e. Leadership.

(1) In general, the leadership in the 2nd Division is adequate, however decisions at all levels are difficult to obtain because each individual must go to his next superior before he will make a decision on even the most insignificant matter. Needless to say, this slows down all operations and logistical efforts.

(a) BG Merid, the CG, 2nd Division, seems to leave the running of the Division to his deputy while he himself acts somewhat as a staff officer to the Governor-General of Eritrea. In this case, he does delegate authority to his deputy, however no further. BG Merid frequently goes off for months on tours with RMT, and by himself, leaving his deputy to run the Division.

(b) BG Telahoun, Deputy CG, 2nd Division, is an intelligent, resourceful leader, however he does not delegate authority and no one does anything without first consulting him. This ties him up unnecessarily and does not allow him to devote full time to the things that he should. Probably this lack of delegation of authority at all levels is because of distrust of subordinate commanders.

(c) Col Atnafu, Chief of Staff, is almost entirely ineffective. No staff meetings are held, and principal staff officers affect almost no coordination with each other. When asked by the senior advisor why no staff meetings were held, his reply was that information was leaked one time, resulting in the former CG being assassinated.

(d) Col Yilma, CO 6th Brigade, gives the impression of knowing exactly what must be done for effective operations against the ELF, however very little progress can be seen, especially in the areas of Civil Affairs/Civic Action. He is an intelligent, aggressive leader and his problems may stem from the fact that he has to go to his superiors for decisions and they are slow in coming.

(e) Col Ayalew, CO 8th Brigade, is relatively new in his job, but he is slow in making changes to improve the situation. The Brigade moved from Gondar to Agerdat a year and a half ago, yet the mechanics tool sets and PLL are still located in Gondar despite repeated recommendations by advisors to move everything forward.

(f) Col Worku, CO 12th Brigade, is the most effective Brigade Commander in the Division. He is resourceful and aggressive. He has begun an effective Civil Affairs/Civic Action program and this is producing results in his AOR. He is hampered by a medical problem with his back and is presently undergoing treatment in Israel. He has had intensive military schooling in the U.S. and probably this accounts for his progressiveness.

(g) In general, the Battalion Commanders are good, but seldom get the chance to run their entire battalion on an operation because their main activity is company size patrols.

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(h) Company Commanders are mostly well trained and experienced, however there seems to be a lack of aggressiveness. They do not like to patrol with a unit smaller than a company and therefore cannot cover as much territory as they could if they would patrol with smaller elements.

(2) In general, leadership suffers most in the Division because of lack of delegation of authority.

f. Civic Action and its Effectiveness.

(1) Until the Division was given grain under the "Food for Work" program, there was virtually no civic action. However, since that time progress has been made. The 12th Brigade at Keren has made the most use of this program, building roads connecting remote villages with main lines of communication. This is not only good for the villages, but also allows the Division to patrol these areas more effectively.

(2) The main problem in administering this program has been that the units do not report to the Division the number of persons given the grain and the total amount of grain used.

(3) The "Food for Work" program has also been used to re-settle villagers from remote areas where they can be watched and given protection by government agencies.

(4) The effectiveness of this limited civic action effort is beginning to show in that approximately 50 ELF have given up recently because they are "tired of fighting and achieving nothing" and because they are not receiving support from villagers anymore.

g. Intelligence

(1) Host government intelligence organizations.

The IEGF requested three or four years ago that MAAG no longer furnish intelligence advisors and not concern itself with intelligence activities now seems a thing of the past and it is believed MAAG can again enter the intelligence area, if highly trained intelligence advisors were made available. At present Israeli advisors are extremely active in the intelligence area.

(2) Evaluation of Host Country Intelligence effort.

(a) Significant limiting factors. The most significant limiting factor in the IEGF intelligence gathering effort in Eritrea is a lack of well trained low level agents in the insurgency area. In a discussion with the deputy CG, 2nd Division, he stated that they knew most of the lines of communication used by the Insurgents, but that in many instances they had no agents in these areas to report insurgent activity. The main reason for this shortcoming was a failure on the part of IEGF in the early stages of the insurgency to recognize the need for "grass roots" intelligence. Although a few division level intelligence

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officers were trained (some in the U.S.), comprehensive intelligence plans were not formulated, nor were low level intelligence networks established. Division intelligence personnel have therefore relied on rumors and on sporadic reports from a few semi-trained agents in the insurgency areas. The result has been confusing at best, and often, deliberately misleading. The situation is presently improving somewhat, as the IEGF has come to realize the need for reliable intelligence. A general intelligence plan which was outlined by MAAG personnel has been adopted by 2nd Division. Agents are now being recruited from the country side, given some training and sent back to their villages to collect information. If this trend continues, intelligence operations should improve over the next year.

(b) Another factor limiting the effectiveness of intelligence gathering in Eritrea is the sharp political, religious and ethnic divisions among the population; notably among the highland Christians, who dominate the military and political establishments, and the lowland Moslems who make up the bulk of the population of Eritrea. Heavy handed treatment by the government agencies over the years, coupled with the traditional prejudices, have alienated the Moslem majority and have made them justifiably wary in dealing with representatives of the military. Therefore, although in many cases the people may not be openly connected with the insurgent movement, their sympathies do not extend to the government. This condition makes intelligence activities extremely difficult. Civic action projects in recent months have improved the situation to a small degree, but the long standing hatreds are still there.

4. Civil Disturbance Operation.

a. Organization: Although municipal police have primary responsibility for civil disturbance in the cities, Army and Commando Police are available to assist if necessary. So far, the disturbances in the Asmara, Massawa area have been minor and the police have been able to handle them.

b. Tactics and techniques: When dealing with disturbances, the methods are severe, consisting of beatings and shooting into the crowd. This tends to break up and quiet the disturbance but creates hard feelings toward the government.

c. Mass apprehension and detention procedures: Most civil disturbances have been student demonstrations. In these cases, the students have been rounded-up en masse and put to work on road projects or given military drill under guard. They may be held for as long as three or four months.

d. In theory, all government military forces would be under the control of the Governor-General if a disturbance occurred in Eritrea that required Army or Commando Police assistance to the police. I feel, however, from experience in other matters, that there would be little coordination between these units and it would probably not be a unified effort.

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5. U.S. role in support of local government.

a. U.S. Military Forces.

(1) Degree of involvement: The US MAAG Ethiopia is specifically prohibited from becoming involved in combat operations, or from venturing into any areas where combat operations are likely to occur. Involvement therefore is limited to advising the Ethiopian military units on training, organizational and logistical matters.

(2) Command Structure: Army Section is divided into two Branches; Materiel, and Operations and Training Branch. All personnel in both branches are advisors. O&T Advisors are advisors to the various tactical units: the four Infantry Divisions, Army Aviation, Armor, Artillery and Airborne Units. The Materiel Branch Advisors advise the technical services: Ordnance, M, Transportation, Signal and Engineer. The tech advisors not only advise their counterpart tech service chiefs, but also make frequent visits to the tactical units to advise and assist the unit commanders in logistical matters. These visits are coordinated with the unit advisors in order to maintain unity of effort.

(3) Effectiveness of U.S. military support: U.S. military support has been reasonably effective in training and equipping the IEGF.

(a) Personnel that have been trained in CONUS over the past ten years occupy most of the key positions in the Army. The trend now is to assign CONUS trained personnel as instructors in the various schools, thereby strengthening the military school systems. If this trend continues, the IEGF should be self sufficient in training its own personnel within a few years. Without U.S. support in this area, the school system would be set back considerably.

(b) The material support rendered by the U.S. has virtually brought the IEGF from the spear throwing stage to where it is now - a modern and formidable force. The equipment that has been supplied is in most cases adequate for this developing Army. Equipment modernization programs will be necessary from time to time in order for the IEGF to maintain its superiority in the Horn of Africa.

6. Lessons Learned.

a. Operations: In view of the lack of MAAG involvement in actual operations, and the reluctance of IEGF to talk about combat actions, lessons learned in this area deal mainly with the organization and planning techniques of the IEGF 2nd Division, the only unit actively engaged in counter insurgency.

(1) Organization: The 2nd Division is organized for conventional warfare which is not entirely suitable in the present counterinsurgency effort. Primary difficulties encountered are:

(a) Communication is slow between the operational units and their headquarters, causing reactions to contacts and reinforcement to be too late in most cases.

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(b) The G-3 section is not organized to effectively plan or control Division operations. There is no tactical operations center or communications center.

(c) There is no Division reaction force available and no aircraft or other means to transport a reaction force quickly if it were required.

(d) Air ground support planning is virtually non-existent and in most cases planning is not started until there is a requirement, and reaction is so slow that the target is gone before the planes arrive.

(e) Units are reluctant to operate on less than company size patrols and are not able to surprise the ELF or to effectively cover their assigned area.

b. Intelligence/Counterintelligence: The intelligence effort is very limited as little effort is made to place agents in areas that are known to be ELF dominated. Villagers won't talk to military for fear of reprisals by ELF.

c. Training: There are very few personnel in the Division trained in insurgency operations or civil affairs/civic action operations which are so necessary in an insurgency situation.

d. Logistics: Most commanders are not aware of proper logistical planning and rely on their higher headquarters to anticipate their logistical requirements, which rarely happens.

e. Communications: The Division lacks an adequate communication center which hampers command and control of units on operations. Communications within Brigade and lower units is generally adequate, but more emphasis needs to be placed on maintenance of communications equipment.

f. Psychological Operations: Until recently there have been no psychological operations. Instruction was given recently to the Division officers, and pamphlets have been distributed offering amnesty to ELF personnel, but the results of this cannot be judged yet.

MILTON F. UFFMANN
Colonel, GS
Chief, Army Section

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